

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

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Saturday JULY 21. 1744. § N<sup>o</sup>. 73.  
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*Account of the Revival of Religion at LYME West Parish
in Connecticut, finished.*

UPON the whole, I am persuaded there has been a wonderful Work of God's Grace among us, and in many other Places where I have been acquainted; and the Sorrows and Joys that have been so common, were produc'd in general by the Operations of the Holy Spirit upon the Souls of Men.-----The Joys were the Joys of the Christian, and not wild, enthusiastick Whims. I have met with few, among the 'Thousands' that I have convers'd with (some at home and others abroad) but cou'd give a rational Account of their Joys. The Foundation of them appear'd to be laid in Faith, which flow'd out in Praises to God; Self-abasement; godly jealousy, &c. I must confess that I am a Stranger to the religious Joys of *new Converts* among us, after the strictest Inquiry, and long Observation, if there are not the Concomitants of their Joys. And the same I may say of others in other Places (some few excepted) where I have been most conversant with the Subjects of this Grace. Perhaps, if those that have set themselves to speak and write against the Times had acquainted themselves more intimately with the Subjects of these Sorrows and Joys, and depended less upon Accounts from those that never car'd to converse much with them, they wou'd have given juster Representations of these Things, and not have born false Witness against the glorious Work of the late Day of Grace.

I ask Pardon for my taking up so much of your Time; and if you think it for the Glory of the Redeemer to suffer the whole or any Part of this Account to be publish'd, you

have my Consent. That you may have much of the Presence of God, and a great Blessing attending your Labours in the Ministry, is the Prayer of,

Your affectionate, unworthy Brother,
JONATHAN PARSONS.

Attestation to the above Account by Richard Lord, Esq; and others of the Church in LYME West-Parish.

WE the subscribing Brethren of the first Church of Christ in *Lyme*, having heard our Rev. Pastor read over the preceeding Account of the Revival of Religion, and being much acquainted with the Subjects of the late Work, as also with the Circumstances of the most extraordinary Particulars related in the Account (*i.e.* those which relate to this Place) do give our Attestation to the Truth of the Account, so far as it respects this Place, according to the best of our Knowledge and Judgment; tho' we cant but be of Opinion that much more might have been added to show the Glory of it among us.

*Richard Lord
Zechariah Marvin
John Denison
Moses Noyes
Joseph Mather, the 3d.*

Revival of Religion at SUTTON in the County of Worcester, in the Massachusetts-Province, about forty Miles to the Southward of the West from Boston: In a Letter from the Rev. Mr. HALL Pastor of the Church there, to the Rev. Mr. PRINCE.

Rev. Sir,

AS to the Matter, you was pleased some Months ago, to write to me about, respecting the Rise and Progress of the Work of God among us; more especially in the late remarkable Day, of the Lord's Visitation of his People: I have drawn up a brief Account, which is as followeth.

It is more than *fifteen Years* since I was settled here in the Ministry: when there were about *eighty Families* in the Town. When I first came among this People which was in the

the Year 1728 I was wholly unapprized of their Condition, both as to their moral and religious Character : But before I was ordain'd their Pastor the Scene opened it self to my View, in sundry Respects, very dark and Melancholly : which fill'd me with many discouraging Apprehensions as to my settling with them : And a Sense of the Greatness of the Work in general, and of some peculiar Difficulties and Hazards attending my settling among this People, plunged me into deep Distress. But however some Days before my Ordination, I was made to hope, that as dark as Things now were, I should behold *the Glory of the LORD* in this Place, in the Advancements of the Kingdom of Grace among this People : and I believe it was from GOD. And I frequently have experienced Support and quickning from this Hope, in the midst of some very gloomy Passages of Providence, that have since passed over me.

There was soon after my settling here, by the Favour of GOD, some considerable Abatement of that too common Prophaneness and some other vitious Practices visible among us. And within the Space of *two Years* we had a very large Addition to the Church more than doubling the Number of Communicants.

After this, there appear'd a gradual Abatement of religious Concern ; and for the Space of *five Years* there was little Appearance of the Spirit of Conviction among this People. During this Term, a *raging Fever* swept away a considerable Number in a sudden and awful Manner. Yet few if any were observed to shift their Courses : The Filthy were filthy still ; or rather growing more so, to Appearance : and a visible Symptom of a Spirit of slumbering attended Professors among us.

In the Year 1735, the great Concerns of Religion, in some considerable Degree appeared to move upon the Hearts of many among us. At which Time it came into my Mind, (and I trust it was from GOD,) to *visit* the People of my Charge, and to apply my self particularly to *every one* that was arriv'd to Years of Understanding ; that I might know the State of the Flock ; and make particular Application to the Consciences of young and old among us.

This appeared to be attended with some very hopeful Symptoms of Success.

At this Time, *Family Meetings* were set up in *four Parts* of our Town.

Articles were also drawn up and subscribed by some, if not all of said Societies, by which each Neighbourhood or Family-Society, were obliged to attend the set Times of their Meetings which was *once a Month*: and also engaged themselves to exercise a most peculiar Watchfulness over each other; to be free in brotherly Admonition; and frequent in religious Conversation one with another, &c. A Number of young Men among us also about the same Time form'd themselves in a Society; to be Helpers of one another in the Way of the Kingdom of Heaven. At these Meetings they frequently had a Sermon preach'd to them. And some Things now began for a while to look hopeful among us.

These religious Meetings, were mostly, if not all continued, till the late remarkable Revival among us. Yet not so but that in about *five Years* space, the general Face of Religion among us was sunk down to a very low and melancholly Ebb indeed.

God was pleas'd wonderfully to convince me of this, on the latter End of April 1740, and greatly to humble me; and with a most sweet and gracious band of Love drew out my Soul to look after my high Calling in CHRIST JESUS.

Now I was again at this Time filled with an encouraging Persuasion, that I should behold the Power of Religion reviving among us in the Conversion of Souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. Together with this Persuasion, a most ardent Thirst, came upon me, that I might gain Souls for whom Christ died: To which End I longed for the Sanctuary. And from this Time I had more Knowledge than ever before, what it means to preach with the Spirit and with the Understanding also: altho' still attended with great Weakness.

Soon after this, we had Lectures here, usually once a Fortnight, to our young People. And the preaching of the blessed Gospel was, by times, my great Delight.

Our Assembly frequently appear'd very solemnly attentive; and kindly to accept, urgent and repeated Assurances of the necessity of a Reformation: but I could not presently perceive that the Word took any prevailing Hold upon their Hearts.

The Fall after this, the Rev. Mr. Whitefield preach'd in the neighbouring Town. I perceiv'd afterwards, that some
of

of our People were brought under *Conviction*, by hearing the Word from him. And some few the *Winter following*, appear'd to remain under Concern : but in general there were great Symptoms of Hardness of Heart : and this appear'd more melancholly, because it was a Time of fore Mortality : for neither the Word nor Providences of God, to any genuine Appearance touch'd their Hearts. Upon which I told one of our Christian Brethren, (the *Spring of the Year following*,) that I had it in my Heart to go preach the Gospel at *Smithfield*, or in some Place where they had *no Minister* ; for that I was upon the Point of despairing of Success among my own People.

But so it was, that the very *next Sabbath* following, I saw considerable Tokens of the *Goings of God* in the Congregation : Our Assembly was generally swallowed up in Tears : and from this Time, I perceived a more general Concern set upon the Countenances of this People. I had just been breathing out my Complaints, with a *Who hath believed our Report*, &c. But now on a sudden there were some hopeful Symptoms of Life from the Dead : for sundry Persons came to me under Soul-Concern soon after. Some of which I have since Reason to think were about that Time brought out of Darkness, into marvellous Light. Some of whom were soon after visibly *added to the LORD* in the Way of his Communion among us.

Many appear'd under Concern ; and great Attention, and great Seriousness hence-forward appear'd in our public Assemblies, and usually much weeping. And blessed be God, a prevailing Check seem'd to fall upon many Kinds of Evil-Doers : and *Tavern-Hauntings* and *Night-Assemblings* of young People for wanton Pastime seem'd at once to disappear.

Upon the *Election Day* † following our young People desir'd a Sermon ; which they had deliver'd them, from those Words *John 25. 15. Choose you this Day whom you will serve.* And

† For the Information of Strangers, observe that the *last Wednesday in May* annually, is the Day in the *Massachusetts Province* for the *Election of his Majesty's Council* for the Province for the Year ensuing : and this Day has been generally a Day of *great Diversion* through the Province.

soon after the Sun was down, I was inform'd that our public Tavern was clear of Town People both young and old.

In the *Fall* of this Year which was 1741, the Concern seem'd much to increase upon many People here both *old* and *young*, and sundry Persons more gave Grounds to hope they had received the *Spirit of Adoption*. But as for the *generality*, of such as had been brought under *Conviction*, and some Amendment of Life; they still appear'd under the *Spirit of Bondage*, and unexperienc'd as to any saving Work: which occasion'd me to write on *September* 20th, 1741, concerning the visible Appearance of Concern upon a frequently weeping Assembly, thus, "Many seem'd pierced with the Arrows of *Conviction*:" "but alas I have seen it often, while *Convictions* fall off and *Israel* remains ungathered! But I will wait upon God, who is able to work effectually. Oh! when shall it once be?"

The *January* following, there appeared hopeful Symptoms of a broken Spirit and a bleeding Heart. What I minuted down of that Date expresses thus,-----"Many indeed speak *trembling*. I hope an *Hundred* Persons among us are in a deep Concern, &c." A few Days after, thus,-----"Sure I never needed more of the divine Help than now: many are pressing after Heaven, and many in great Distress."

Soon after this we had a comfortable Appearance of a considerable Number offering to full Communion: they came as a Cloud and as Doves to their Windows. And my Time was now almost wholly taken up in discoursing with Persons seeking the Way to Zion with their Faces thitherward.

About this Time the Rev. Mr. Edwards of Northampton; and the Rev. Mr. Parkman, and Mr. Prentice, Neighbour Ministers preach'd here: whose Labours among us God was pleas'd to smile upon for Good. During all this, we were not exercis'd with any public Out-cries in Time of publick Worship; altho' there might frequently be discover'd Persons under a most deep and solemn Sense of the Truths held forth unto them.

It is observable how at this remarkable Day, a Spirit of deep Concern would seize upon Persons. Some were in the House, and some walking in the High-Way: some in the Woods, and some in the Field: some in Conversation, and some in secret Retirement: some Children and some adult, and some
antient

antient Persons, would sometimes on a sudden be brought under the strongest Impressions from a Sense of the great Realities of the other World and eternal Things. But such Things, as far as I can learn, were usually if not ever, impressed upon Men while they were in some Sort exercising their Minds upon the *Word of God* or *spiritual Objects*. And for the most Part it has been under the public *Preaching* of the *Word* that these lasting Impressions have been fastned upon them.

Religious Societies were now set up in *several Parts* of the *Town* to be held *weekly*. And reading, praying, singing Praises, and speaking one to another of their particular Experiences were frequently Means of Enlargement of Heart : and some where by this Means brought under Conviction who were before Strangers to the Power of Godliness.

(Nevertheless the imprudent Conduct of a particular zealous Person or two in going beyond the proper bounds of Duty and Decency in some of these Meetings, I do apprehend was very hurtful to the Progress of this blessed Work among us.)

Convictions in this remarkable Day of the Lord's Visitation appear'd to take hold of Men's Hearts with a permanent and prevailing Power : that many poor Sinners, were made to pant for *Christ as the Hart panteth for the Water-Brooks* ; and I trust most of them found no Rest 'till they found a SAVIOUR.

We have had a considerable Number visibly brought home that were before not only destitute of the *Form of Godliness* ; but also sundry who were before of but a poor Character in Point of *Morals*.

And I have Reason to think a considerable Number of such were now bro't home to Christ who were before *visible Professors*.

In the *Summer 1742*, but few Persons were brought under Conviction : and from that Time to this *Conversion*, have not to Appearance been so frequent among us. Nevertheless in the *Fall* of the Year 1742, upon the Rev. Mr. *Daniel Rogers's* coming to us, we had a considerable Revival of the Work : at, and after which, the Spirit of Conviction seem'd for a while very powerful among our *Children*, from *eight to twelve or fourteen Years* of Age. A small Number of whom I would hope retain abiding Impressions. But most of them I fear are much the same they were before under Concern.

Also

Also about this Time, public Cryings-out under Concern became something frequent among us for some little Time : though indeed seldom when we had none but our own Congregation. But such Things being *cautiously guarded against*, have never here become common. And in my Apprehension, the Gospel was attended with less Success afterwards, by Reason of the Prejudices which many among us conceived against the Work, because of some public Adoe that they concluded ought to have been better guarded against than they were. But however, such Things, I am fully convinced, have been many Times altogether unavoidable, from the over-powering Views of the great Reality of the eternal World : and accordingly, that it is a great Fault in such Persons as have conceived such Prejudices against the Work of the Spirit of God, because some Persons under the Operation thereof in strong Convictions or Compunction, have lost the Command of their own Passions ; and have discovered themselves when under the most proper Concern as to the Matter of it ; yet thro' the Over-bearings thereof unable to command their own Faculties.

Although of late this Work of divine Grace has been under melancholly Abatements ; yet I am not without Hopes that some Souls have the *Year past* been savingly united to Jesus Christ. And there hath been very lately a comfortable Instance or two, to hopeful Appearance, that encourages me to hope still as for the *latter Rain*, and for the *great Rain of GOD's Strength* in due Time.

I was just now, observing something of this Work attending *Children*. So I would observe, that altho' the generality of such amongst us as have experienced this Work were between *twenty* and *forty Years* of Age ; yet that there hath been several Instances of Persons *older*, yea, some of them very remarkable Instances ; and one of about *seventy-five Years old* ; who lately, and about *two Years* after her Conversion, departed this Life with Joy and Triumph.

(To be finished in our next.)